

**Representative Hall, Atlanta, Georgia****Wednesday, January 11, 2006**

The House met pursuant to adjournment at 12:30 o'clock, P.M., this day and was called to order by the Speaker.

The roll was called and the following Representatives answered to their names:

Abdul-Salaam	Dean	Holt	Marin	Sailor
Amerson	Dickson	Horne	Martin	Scheid
Anderson	Dodson	Houston	Maxwell	Scott, A
Ashe	Drenner	Howard, E	May	Scott, M
Barnard	Ehrhart	Hudson	E McClinton	Setzler
Bearden	England	Hugley	Meadows	Shaw
Benton	Epps	Jackson	Mills	Sheldon
Black	Everson	Jacobs	E Mitchell	Sims, F
Borders	Fleming	Jenkins	Morgan	Sinkfield
Bridges	Floyd, J	Jennings	Morris	Smith, B
Brooks	E Fludd	Johnson	Mosley	Smith, L
Brown	Forster	Jones, J	Mumford	Smith, P
Bryant	Franklin	Jones, S	Murphy, J	Smith, R
Buckner, D	Freeman	Jordan	Murphy, Q	Smith, T
Buckner, G	Gardner	Keen	Oliver	Smith, V
Burkhalter	Geisinger	Keown	O'Neal	Talton
Burmeister	Graves, T	Kidd	Orrock	Teilhet
Burns	Greene	Knight	Parsons	Thomas, A.M
Butler	Hanner	Lakly	Powell	Thomas, B
Casas	Harbin	Lane, B	Randall	Tumlin
Chambers	Hatfield	Lane, R	Reece, B	Warren
Cheokas	Heard, J	Lewis	Reece, S	Watson
Cole	Heard, K	Lindsey	Reese	Wilkinson
Cooper	Hembree	Lord	Rice	Williams, A
Cox	Henson	Loudermilk	Roberts	Williams, E
Crawford	Hill, C	Lunsford	Rogers	Williams, R
Cummings	Hill, C.A	Maddox	Royal	Yates
Davis	Holmes	Mangham	Rynders	Richardson,
Day				Speaker

The following members were off the floor of the House when the roll was called:

Representatives Barnes of the 78th, Beasley-Teague of the 65th, Benfield of the 85th, Bordeaux of the 162nd, Bruce of the 64th, Byrd of the 20th, Carter of the 159th, Channell of the 116th, Coan of the 101st, Coleman of the 144th, Coleman of the 97th, Dollar of the 45th, Dukes of the 150th, Floyd of the 99th, Golick of the 34th, Graves of the 137th, Heckstall of the 62nd, James of the 135th, Jamieson of the 28th, Knox of the 24th, Manning of the 32nd, McCall of the 30th, Millar of the 79th, Mosby of the 90th, Parham of the 141st, Parrish of the 156th, Porter of the 143rd, Ralston of the 7th, Ray of the 136th, Sims of the 169th, Stanley-Turner of the 53rd, Stephens of the 164th, Stephenson of the 92nd, Walker of the 107th, Willard of the 49th, and Wix of the 33rd.

They wish to be recorded as present.

The following communication was received:

House of Representatives  
332 State Capitol  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

January 10, 2006

Ms. Robyn Underwood, Fiscal Office  
Suite 434, State Capitol  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Robyn:

Effective today, I am reinstating Representative Chuck Scheid as Secretary of the Appropriations Committee which will also reinstate him as an Ex-Officio member of the Way and Means Committee.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

/s/ Glenn Richardson  
Glenn Richardson, Speaker  
Georgia House of Representatives

JGR:js

Cc: Robbie Rivers, Clerk  
Representative Ben Harbin  
Representative Larry O'Neal

Prayer was offered by Dr. Benn Tate, Rocksprings Congressional Methodist Church, Milner, Georgia.

The members pledged allegiance to the flag.

Representative Heard of the 104th, Chairman of the Committee on Information and Audits, reported that the Journal of the previous legislative day had been read and found to be correct.

By unanimous consent, the reading of the Journal was dispensed with.

The Journal was confirmed.

By unanimous consent, the following was established as the order of business during the first part of the period of unanimous consents:

1. Introduction of Bills and Resolutions.
2. First reading and reference of House Bills and Resolutions.
3. Second reading of Bills and Resolutions.
4. Reports of Standing Committees.
5. Third reading and passage of Local uncontested Bills.
6. First reading and reference of Senate Bills and Resolutions.

By unanimous consent, the following Bills and Resolutions of the House were introduced, read the first time and referred to the Committees:

HB 950. By Representatives Cox of the 102nd, Burkhalter of the 50th, Horne of the 71st, Burmeister of the 119th, Geisinger of the 48th and others:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 2 of Title 1 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to persons and their rights, so as to prohibit governmental entities in this state from restricting or prohibiting a public employee or public school student from verbal expressions relating to the celebration or observance of any public or legal holiday; to provide for legislative findings; to provide for construction; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Special Rules.

HB 956. By Representatives Manning of the 32nd, Tumlin of the 38th, Ehrhart of the 36th, Parsons of the 42nd, Johnson of the 37th and others:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 17-4-47 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to issuance of arrest warrants by video conference, testimony, initial bond hearings, and oaths, so as to provide that an arrest warrant for a probation violation may be issued by means of a video conference; to provide that a hearing relating to the issuance of a bond

connected with an offense may be issued by such a conference; to amend Code Section 42-8-38 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating the arrest of a probationer for violation of terms of probation and hearings and disposition of such charges, so as to provide that probation proceedings may be conducted by means of a video conference; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary Non-Civil.

HB 958. By Representative Ashe of the 56th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the O.C.G.A., relating to elementary and secondary education, so as to eliminate the requirement of local five mill share funds and to delete references to local five mill share funds; to change provisions relating to tuition for nonresident students, midterm adjustments, equalization grants, calculation of state funds to be allotted to local school systems, the school lunch program, grants for projects to approve effectiveness, grants for electronic technology, reassignment of students, definitions relative to charter schools, and funding for charter schools; to provide for annual allocation to local school systems of an amount equal to the proceeds for the preceding year from the 1 percent state-wide sales and use tax for education; to provide for related matters; to provide for a contingent effective date and applicability; to provide for automatic repeal in certain circumstances; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Education.

HB 967. By Representative Ashe of the 56th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 4A of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to community involvement in education, so as to provide for development of a wellness plan for each school by the school council; to provide for reporting; to amend Part 3 of Article 16 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to health of students, so as to require implementation of a wellness plan for each school; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Education.

HB 988. By Representatives Hill of the 180th, Lane of the 167th, Keen of the 179th, Smith of the 168th and Mosley of the 178th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 12 of Title 50 of the O.C.G.A., relating to state government commissions and other agencies, so as to provide for the establishment of the War of 1812 Bicentennial Commission; to provide for the membership of the commission and the powers and duties of the commission; to provide for expenses; to provide for matters relating to commemorating the historic events that preceded and are associated with the War of 1812; to provide for abolition of the commission; to provide for repeal of the laws relating to such commission and the powers and duties of the commission; to create the War of 1812 Commemoration Commission and provide for its membership, powers, duties, and operations; to provide for related matters; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Special Rules.

HB 989. By Representatives Fleming of the 117th, Willard of the 49th, Ralston of the 7th and Hatfield of the 177th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 2 of Chapter 6 of Title 15 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to clerks of superior courts, so as to change sunset dates for real estate or personal property filing fees; to change a sunset date relating to the state-wide uniform automated information system; to change a sunset date relating to collection and remittance of real estate or personal property filing fees; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

HB 990. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Part 1 of Article 3 of Chapter 8 of Title 48 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the special county 1 percent sales and use tax, so as to authorize use and expenditure of such tax proceeds for certain county maintenance and repair purposes; to provide for procedures, conditions, and limitations; to provide an effective date; to provide for applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

HB 991. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to health, Title 34 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to labor and industrial relations, Title 37 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to mental health, Title 43 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to professions, Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to public officers, and Title 50 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to state government, so as to provide for the repeal of certain provisions relating to community service boards; to provide for related matters; to provide effective dates; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Governmental Affairs.

HB 992. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 48-5-7.1 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to preferential assessment of tangible real property devoted to bona fide agricultural purposes, so as to change the conditions of ownership with respect to such property; to provide for a contingent effective date; to provide for applicability; to provide for automatic repeal under certain circumstances; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

HB 993. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 1 of Chapter 8 of Title 48 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to state sales and use tax, so as to change certain provisions regarding the collecting and remitting of sales and use tax; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

HB 994. By Representative Ashe of the 56th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 20-1A-10 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to licensing, commission, and registration of early care and education programs, so as to provide for certification of excellence of early care and learning programs in specific areas of service; to provide for rules and regulations; to provide for notation of any certification on the program's license, registration, or commission; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Education.

HB 995. By Representative Greene of the 149th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Title 40 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to motor vehicles and traffic, so as to change certain provisions relating to free license plates and revalidation decals for certain disabled veterans; to change certain provisions relating to special license plates for disabled veterans not qualified under Code Section 40-2-69; to change certain provisions relating to parking permits for persons with disabilities; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Motor Vehicles.

HB 996. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 48-8-110 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to definitions regarding the county special purpose local option sales and use tax, so as to authorize use and expenditure of such tax proceeds for certain county maintenance and repair purposes; to provide an effective date; to provide for applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

HB 997. By Representatives Millar of the 79th, Coleman of the 97th, Casas of the 103rd, Jones of the 46th and Reece of the 11th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Part 5 of Article 6 of Chapter 2 of Title 20 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to program weights and funding requirements relative to elementary and secondary education, so as to change certain provisions regarding program weights; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Education.

HB 998. By Representatives Graves of the 12th, Ehrhart of the 36th, Day of the 163rd, Jones of the 46th, Sheldon of the 105th and others:

A BILL To be entitled an Act to amend Part 3 of Article 4 of Chapter 11 of Title 16 of the O.C.G.A, relating to carrying and possession of firearms, so as to provide a short title; to provide for legislative intent; to provide a definition; to provide that it shall be lawful for any person who may lawfully

possess firearms to park a motor vehicle on any property set aside for the parking of a motor vehicle when the person is lawfully transporting and storing a firearm or firearms in the motor vehicle and the firearm or firearms are locked in or locked to the motor vehicle; to provide for certain civil immunity for occurrences which result from, are connected with, or are incidental to the use of a firearm which is being lawfully transported and stored in a locked motor vehicle on any property set aside for the parking of motor vehicles; to provide for an exception to such immunity; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Public Safety.

HB 999. By Representatives Maddox of the 172nd, Burkhalter of the 50th, Keen of the 179th, McCall of the 30th, Ray of the 136th and others:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapter 50 of Title 43 of the O.C.G.A., relating to veterinarians and veterinary technicians, so as to change certain provisions relating to definitions relative to such chapter; to change certain provisions relating to exemptions from licensing and registration requirements; to change certain provisions relating to veterinary technicians; to provide for legislative purpose; to authorize the practice of veterinary technology by veterinary technicians under certain circumstances; to change certain provisions relating to application for registration as veterinary technician, qualifications, examination, renewal, applicants registered in other states, and responsibility of the State Board of Veterinary Medicine; to change certain provisions relating to scheduling and administration of examinations, reexamination, and reactivation; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Agriculture and Consumer Affairs.

HB 1000. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Neal of the 1st, Horne of the 71st, Chambers of the 81st and Cox of the 102nd:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 1 of Chapter 16 of Title 15 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to general provisions relative to sheriffs, so as to provide for the responsibility and duties of the sheriff regarding courthouse and courtroom security; to provide notice and hearing; to provide for factors to consider in determining appropriate security measures; to provide for instruction to the jury; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.



Referred to the Committee on Judiciary Non-Civil.

HB 1001. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Horne of the 71st, Cox of the 102nd, Stephens of the 164th and Bearden of the 68th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 16-11-126 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the offense of carrying a concealed weapon, so as to change certain provisions regarding the transporting of certain firearms; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary Non-Civil.

HB 1002. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Harbin of the 118th, Cox of the 102nd, Stephens of the 164th, Chambers of the 81st and others:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 48-8-3 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to exemptions from state sales and use tax, so as to provide for an exemption with respect to the sale or certain emergency preparedness products for a limited period of time; to provide for conditions and exclusions; to provide for powers, duties, and authority of the state revenue commissioner; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

HB 1003. By Representatives Talton of the 145th, O'Neal of the 146th, Floyd of the 147th and Ray of the 136th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend an Act entitled "An Act to make provisions for the Magistrate Court of Houston County," approved March 1, 1984 (Ga. L. 1984, p. 3652), as amended, so as to provide for the election of the chief magistrate and magistrates; to provide for procedures; to provide for the filling of vacancies; to provide for the submission of this Act to the United States Department of Justice; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on State Planning & Community Affairs - Local.

HB 1004. By Representatives Sims of the 169th, Rice of the 51st and Crawford of the 127th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Chapters 2, 3, and 5 of Title 40 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to registration, licensing, and certificates of title for motor vehicles and drivers' licenses, so as to provide for registration of all-terrain vehicles; to provide for certificates of title for such vehicles; to provide for certain drivers of such vehicles to be licensed drivers; to provide for operators of all-terrain vehicles under the age of 16 to complete a safety course; to provide for supervision of children under the age of 16 operating all-terrain vehicles; to provide for penalties; to provide for related matters; to provide for an effective date and applicability; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Motor Vehicles.

HB 1005. By Representatives Borders of the 175th, Black of the 174th, Williams of the 4th, Shaw of the 176th, Day of the 163rd and others:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Code Section 48-8-3 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to exemptions from state sales and use tax, so as to provide for an exemption with respect to the sale of certain school supplies, clothing, footwear, computers, and computer related accessories for a limited period of time; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

HB 1006. By Representative Ashe of the 56th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 3 of Chapter 2 of Title 40 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to prestige license plates for certain persons and vehicles, so as to emphasize that the renewal registration fees for prestige plates are to be distributed in the same manner as the initial fees; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Motor Vehicles.

HB 1007. By Representative Benfield of the 85th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Article 1 of Chapter 18 of Title 45 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the state employees' health insurance plan, so as to provide that any person who receives compensation pursuant to a resolution of the General Assembly relative to a claim against the state for wrongful conviction approved on or after January

1, 2005, shall be eligible to participate in the state employees' health insurance plan; to provide for an appropriation of funds; to provide for application; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Appropriations.

HR 1039. By Representative Ashe of the 56th:

A RESOLUTION proposing an amendment to the Constitution so as to provide for automatic reduction in the millage rate of local ad valorem taxes for educational purposes; to provide for exceptions; to provide for the imposition of a state sales and use tax at a rate not to exceed 1 percent, as determined by the General Assembly, the proceeds of which shall be used exclusively for educational programs and purposes prior to the college or postsecondary level; to provide for the submission of this amendment for ratification or rejection; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

HR 1048. By Representatives Millar of the 79th, Coleman of the 97th, Jones of the 46th, Williams of the 4th and Holmes of the 61st:

A RESOLUTION creating the House Study Committee on Market-Demand Skills Education in High Schools; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Education.

HR 1049. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A RESOLUTION proposing an amendment to the Constitution so as to authorize the conditions of ownership regarding the preferential assessment for property which is devoted to bona fide agricultural purposes to be established by general law; to provide for the submission of this amendment for ratification or rejection; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

HR 1050. By Representative Stephens of the 164th:

A RESOLUTION proposing an amendment to the Constitution so as to authorize the General Assembly to provide by law for homestead exemptions that essentially freeze the assessment of property with respect to any or all ad valorem property taxes; to provide for ratification of such exemptions which

were previously enacted; to provide for the submission of this amendment for ratification or rejection; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Ways & Means.

HR 1051. By Representative Manning of the 32nd:

A RESOLUTION proposing an amendment to the Constitution so as to specify the public purposes for which the power of eminent domain may be exercised under the authority of the State of Georgia and provide that economic development or redevelopment shall not constitute a public purpose for which private property may be acquired by eminent domain; to provide for submission of this amendment for ratification or rejection; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Judiciary.

HR 1052. By Representatives Manning of the 32nd, Tumlin of the 38th, Stephens of the 164th, Casas of the 103rd, Jenkins of the 8th and others:

A RESOLUTION urging Georgia's state owned resorts and restaurants which serve wine to list the fine wines grown and produced by the Winegrowers Association of Georgia; and for other purposes.

Referred to the Committee on Economic Development & Tourism.

By unanimous consent, the following Bills and Resolutions of the House were read the second time:

HB 940  
HB 953  
HB 959  
HB 961  
HB 966  
HB 981  
HB 983

HB 984  
HB 985  
HB 986  
HB 987  
HR 1036  
HR 1041

Representative Bridges of the 10th District, Chairman of the Committee on Retirement, submitted the following report:

Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Retirement has had under consideration the following Bills of the House and has instructed me to report the same back to the House with the following recommendations:

HB 251 Do Pass  
 HB 344 Do Pass  
 HB 357 Do Pass  
 HB 391 Do Pass  
 HB 476 Do Pass

HB 660 Do Pass, by Substitute  
 HB 749 Do Pass, by Substitute  
 HB 809 Do Pass  
 HB 821 Do Pass

Respectfully submitted,  
 /s/ Bridges of the 10th  
 Chairman

Representative Hill of the 21st District, Chairman of the Committee on Special Rules, submitted the following report:

Mr. Speaker:

Your Committee on Special Rules has had under consideration the following Bill of the House and has instructed me to report the same back to the House with the following recommendation:

HB 978 Do Pass

Respectfully submitted,  
 /s/ Hill of the 21st  
 Chairman

The following report of the Committee on Rules was read and adopted:

### HOUSE RULES CALENDAR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11, 2006

Mr. Speaker and Members of the House:

The Committee on Rules has fixed the calendar for this 3rd Legislative Day as enumerated below:

### DEBATE CALENDAR

#### **Open Rule**

None

**Modified Open Rule**

None

**Modified Structured Rule**

None

**Structured Rule**

HB 970      Liquid propane and natural gas; state tax; temporary exemption; provisions

Bills and Resolutions on this calendar may be called in any order the Speaker desires.

Respectfully submitted,  
/s/ Ehrhart of the 36th  
Chairman

The following member was recognized during the period of Morning Orders and addressed the House:

Henson of the 87th.

The following Resolution of the House was read and referred to the Committee on Rules:

HR 1053. By Representatives Maddox of the 172nd, Keown of the 173rd, Freeman of the 140th, Tumlin of the 38th, Benton of the 31st and others:

A RESOLUTION recognizing and commending Boy Scout Troop 383 and inviting the leaders and members of the troop to appear before the House of Representatives; and for other purposes.

Under the general order of business, established by the Committee on Rules, the following Bill of the House was taken up for consideration and read the third time:

HB 970. By Representatives Roberts of the 154th, Burkhalter of the 50th, O'Neal of the 146th, Golick of the 34th and Smith of the 129th:

A BILL to be entitled an Act to amend Title 48 of the O.C.G.A., relating to revenue and taxation, so as to provide for a partial exemption for a limited period of time with respect to state sales and use taxes applicable to the liquid propane gas commodity sold and delivered primarily for residential heating purposes and to charges for the natural gas commodity billed for residential

use; to provide for legislative findings and intent; to provide for procedures, conditions, and limitations; to provide for powers, duties, and authority of the administrator of Part 2 of Article 15 of Chapter 10 of Title 10 of the O.C.G.A., the "Fair Business Practices Act," as amended; to provide for powers, duties, and authority of the state revenue commissioner with respect to the foregoing; to ratify an executive order of the Governor suspending the collection of such taxes; to provide an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

The report of the Committee, which was favorable to the passage of the Bill, was agreed to.

On the passage of the Bill, the roll call was ordered and the vote was as follows:

Y Abdul-Salaam	Y Crawford	Y Hill, C.A	Y Martin	Y Sailor
Y Amerson	Y Cummings	N Holmes	Y Maxwell	Y Scheid
Y Anderson	Y Davis	Y Holt	Y May	Y Scott, A
Y Ashe	Y Day	Y Horne	Y McCall	Y Scott, M
Y Barnard	N Dean	Y Houston	E McClinton	Y Setzler
Y Barnes	Y Dickson	Y Howard, E	Y Meadows	Y Shaw
Y Bearden	Y Dodson	Y Hudson	Y Millar	Y Sheldon
Y Beasley-Teague	Y Dollar	Y Hugley	Y Mills	Y Sims, C
Y Benfield	Y Drenner	Y Jackson	E Mitchell	Y Sims, F
Y Benton	Y Dukes	Y Jacobs	Morgan	Y Sinkfield
Y Black	Y Ehrhart	Y James	Y Morris	Y Smith, B
Y Bordeaux	Y England	Y Jamieson	Y Mosby	Y Smith, L
Y Borders	Y Epps	Y Jenkins	Y Mosley	Y Smith, P
Y Bridges	Y Everson	Y Jennings	Y Mumford	Y Smith, R
Y Brooks	Y Fleming	Y Johnson	Y Murphy, J	Y Smith, T
Y Brown	Y Floyd, H	Y Jones, J	Y Murphy, Q	Y Smith, V
Y Bruce	Y Floyd, J	Y Jones, S	Y Neal	Y Smyre
Y Bryant	E Fludd	Y Jordan	Y Oliver	Y Stanley-Turner
Y Buckner, D	Y Forster	Y Keen	Y O'Neal	Y Stephens
Y Buckner, G	Y Franklin	Y Keown	Y Orrock	Y Stephenson
Y Burkhalter	Y Freeman	Y Kidd	Y Parham	Y Talton
Y Burmeister	Y Gardner	Y Knight	Y Parrish	Y Teilhet
Y Burns	Y Geisinger	Y Knox	Y Parsons	Y Thomas, A.M
Y Butler	Y Golick	Y Lakly	Y Porter	Y Thomas, B
Y Byrd	Y Graves, D	Y Lane, B	Y Powell	Y Tumlin
Y Carter	Y Graves, T	Y Lane, R	Y Ralston	Y Walker
Y Casas	Y Greene	Y Lewis	Y Randall	Y Warren
Y Chambers	Y Hanner	Y Lindsey	Y Ray	Y Watson
Y Channell	Y Harbin	Y Lord	Y Reece, B	Y Wilkinson
Y Cheokas	Y Hatfield	Y Loudermilk	Y Reece, S	Y Willard
Y Coan	Y Heard, J	Lucas	Y Reese	Y Williams, A
Y Cole	Y Heard, K	Y Lunsford	Y Rice	Y Williams, E
Y Coleman, B	Y Heckstall	Y Maddox	Y Roberts	Y Williams, R
Y Coleman, T	Y Hembree	Y Mangham	Y Rogers	Y Wix
Y Cooper	Y Henson	Y Manning	Y Royal	Y Yates
Y Cox	Y Hill, C	Y Marin	Y Rynders	Richardson, Speaker

On the passage of the Bill, the ayes were 169, nays 2.

The Bill, having received the requisite constitutional majority, was passed.

By unanimous consent, HB 970 was ordered immediately transmitted to the Senate.

The following Resolutions of the House and Senate were read and adopted:

HR 1057. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th, Horne of the 71st, Mosby of the 90th and others:

A RESOLUTION commending Officer Michael D. DeWald; and for other purposes.

HR 1058. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th, Horne of the 71st, Stephenson of the 92nd and others:

A RESOLUTION commending Officer O. J. Concepcion; and for other purposes.

HR 1059. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th, Horne of the 71st, Cox of the 102nd and others:

A RESOLUTION commending Sergeant Doug Mattox; and for other purposes.

HR 1060. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th, Horne of the 71st, Sheldon of the 105th and others:

A RESOLUTION commending Sergeant Michael McKeithan; and for other purposes.

HR 1061. By Representatives Mosley of the 178th, Smith of the 168th and Lane of the 167th:

A RESOLUTION commending and congratulating the members and coaches of the Wayne County 2005 All-Stars Mite Girls softball team; and for other purposes.

HR 1062. By Representatives Royal of the 171st, Rynders of the 152nd, Sims of the 151st and Dukes of the 150th:



A RESOLUTION commending the Darton College golf team; and for other purposes.

HR 1063. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th and Horne of the 71st:

A RESOLUTION commending Special Agent Brian Johnston; and for other purposes.

HR 1064. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th, Horne of the 71st, Neal of the 1st and others:

A RESOLUTION commending Special Agent Thomas Crawford III; and for other purposes.

HR 1065. By Representative Smith of the 113th:

A RESOLUTION commending Jonathan Taylor; and for other purposes.

HR 1066. By Representatives Holt of the 112th, Maxwell of the 17th, Coleman of the 97th, Jordan of the 77th and Casas of the 103rd:

A RESOLUTION commending the National Association for Music Education and the First Lady of the United States, Laura Bush, for their efforts on behalf of the National Anthem Project; and for other purposes.

HR 1067. By Representative Smith of the 113th:

A RESOLUTION commending Christopher Thomas Mengak on becoming an Eagle Scout; and for other purposes.

HR 1068. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th, Horne of the 71st, Setzler of the 35th and others:

A RESOLUTION commending Officer Beth Gatny; and for other purposes.

HR 1069. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th, Horne of the 71st, Barnard of the 166th and others:

A RESOLUTION commending officer Mary Price; and for other purposes.

HR 1070. By Representative Houston of the 170th:

A RESOLUTION commending the class of Leadership Cook 2005; and for other purposes.

HR 1071. By Representative Smith of the 113th:

A RESOLUTION commending Daniel Chamberlin on becoming an Eagle Scout; and for other purposes.

HR 1072. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, Horne of the 71st, Cox of the 102nd, Sheldon of the 105th and others:

A RESOLUTION commending Lieutenant Kevin Moran; and for other purposes.

HR 1073. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, Horne of the 71st, Coleman of the 97th, Cox of the 102nd and others:

A RESOLUTION commending Sergeant Jerry Stancel; and for other purposes.

HR 1074. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th, Horne of the 71st, Channell of the 116th and others:

A RESOLUTION commending EMS Director Blake Thompson; and for other purposes.

HR 1075. By Representatives Day of the 163rd, Chambers of the 81st, James of the 135th, Horne of the 71st, Orrock of the 58th and others:

A RESOLUTION commending Laila Sabree; and for other purposes.

HR 1076. By Representatives Mosley of the 178th, Smith of the 168th, and Lane of the 176th:

A RESOLUTION congratulating the Brantley County 9-10 year-old girls' softball team; and for other purposes.

HR 1077. By Representative Brooks of the 63rd:

A RESOLUTION honoring the life and memory of Mrs. Mattie Turnipseed Favors; and for other purposes.

SR 643. By Senator Harp of the 29th:

A RESOLUTION recognizing January 24, 2006, as "LaGrange College Day" in the State of Georgia and celebrating the 175th anniversary of LaGrange College; and for other purposes.

The Speaker announced the House in recess until 2:45 o'clock, this afternoon.

The Speaker called the House to order.

The hour of convening the Joint Session pursuant to HR 1043 having arrived, the Senate appeared upon the floor of the House and the Joint Session, convened for the purpose of hearing an address from the Governor, was called to order by the President of the Senate, Lieutenant Governor Mark Taylor.

The Resolution calling for the Joint Session was read.

Accompanied by the Committee of Escort and other distinguished guests, His Excellency, Governor Sonny Perdue, appeared upon the floor of the House and delivered the following address:

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Senator Johnson, Representative Burkhalter ... Members of the General Assembly. Constitutional officers and members of the judiciary. The Consular Corps and other distinguished guests. And, most of all, my fellow Georgians:

Today marks the fourth time you've allowed me to come before you to report on the state of our great State of Georgia.

In my first address I spoke of dark clouds and a troubled economy battered by recession. The seas were stormy, but we were determined to find our way to a New Georgia – safe, healthy, educated and growing.

Last year, I reported an economic recovery was underway. Georgians were going back to work. The clouds were parting.

Today I'm happy to say that our progress has continued over the last twelve months. Our job growth has surged. Our communities and our state grow stronger each day.

We're putting the dark clouds behind us. And we have many more sunny days ahead. With our economy growing again, we should give credit where credit is due.

Georgia's economic comeback is, above all, a tribute to our strengths as a state and to the optimism and enterprise of our citizens.

I'm proud of the millions of Georgians who have done the hard work of leading our recovery –

The small business owners who grow companies that create good jobs for Georgia families.

The investors and entrepreneurs who take the risks of bringing new ideas to market.  
The Georgia workers who are more productive and better prepared to compete in the global economy.

I'm proud too of the thousands of new Georgians who move to our state each year from across the country and around the world. Georgia today is the 9th largest state and one of the fastest growing in the nation. At last count, there are over 9 million Georgians.

People keep coming to our state because Georgia is a great place to live, to get an education, to work and to raise a family.

Georgia is a state of opportunity. Our job is to make sure it remains so. And the best way for those of us in public office to do that is to remember that government doesn't create jobs, growth and prosperity – our people do.

Government's role is to create fertile opportunities for Georgians to succeed and prosper. Today I want to share with you my 2006 legislative agenda and budget priorities, which do exactly that.

My agenda for Georgia is based on what Georgians themselves have told me are their priorities – education ... children ... jobs ... safe communities. And a state government that lives within its means and that respects individual liberty.

This should be a familiar list, because these have been my priorities from my first day in office. This year, thanks to our growing economy, we have additional resources to invest in our priorities. I am projecting one and quarter billion dollars in new revenues for 2007. That strong revenue gain gives us all a sense of relief. But our improving revenues are no cause for complacency.

A growing population is good, but more Georgians means more kids in our schools, more drivers on our roads, more patients in health care system. These are the unavoidable obligations that come with growth, just like the arrival of a new baby at home. Meeting those obligations will consume much of our new revenue.

But not all of it. What makes this year's budget different is what we've done together over the last three years to make our state government more efficient and effective.

The \$640 million deficit we inherited three years ago made changing state government's culture of spending not just a good idea, but also a necessity.

We asked each state agency to identify its core mission and to prioritize its budget requests. We took a hard look at every program and cut those we could do without.

I established the Commission for a New Georgia and asked some of our state's top business leaders to recommend ways we could improve the operations of state government. Implementing their recommendations has already saved the taxpayers millions of dollars. And those savings will multiply over the years.

In total, thanks to our sound fiscal management and conservative budgeting, we reduced the size of state government by over \$1 billion per year, while also creating a surplus and rebuilding our rainy day fund.

Because we made the tough decisions then, we are now able to make some of the important investments we had to defer when times were lean, just as we must do in our family budgets.

And we will begin with our top priority – education.

My education budget has a strong classroom focus because the classroom is where learning happens. It is only common sense that we should spend our education dollars where they can do the most good and have the biggest direct impact on student achievement.

That is exactly why I've asked you to establish a standard for local school districts to spend at least 65% of their budgets in the classroom.

I believe that, next to having parents involved in their children's education, the single best thing we can do for our students is to keep dedicated and experienced teachers in our classrooms.

Of course, we all know that a teacher's workday begins long before the first class starts and continues long after the last bell sends the students home.

As the son of a teacher, I also know this from personal experience. My mother taught English, but she taught her students much more than the fundamentals of reading, writing and grammar. She taught them lessons of character and responsibility and helped them gain the confidence and skills they needed to succeed.

Each of us recalls those teachers who inspired us and challenged us to excel. Those of us who are parents know the importance of good teachers in our own children's lives. And

everyone recognizes the critical role teachers play in preparing the next generation to assume their roles in society.

That is why all of us appreciate the demanding and important work that Georgia's teachers do. And that is why I want to give all of our teachers a well-deserved 4% pay raise.

More than half of teachers will receive a 7% raise. Just as importantly, my budget also provides teachers health insurance with... NO increase in premiums.

And let me tell you one more thing. As long as the people of Georgia trust me to be their Governor, our Georgia teachers will remain the highest paid teachers in the Southeast.

Today, I want to share with you, and our teachers, some additional good news. As we all know, many of our teachers dig into their own pockets each school year to purchase classroom materials and supplies.

Teachers buy extra pencils and notebooks for their students ... decorations for the bulletin board ... materials for a class project ... the list is just about endless. But the important point is that teachers are spending their own money to help our children learn.

That dedication deserves recognition. It also deserves a little bit of extra help from us. That's why I've included \$10 million in my budget to provide every Georgia teacher with one of these ... the Classroom Gift Card.

The Classroom Gift Card works just like the store gift cards that many of us found in our stockings at Christmas. Each Classroom Gift Card will be worth 100 dollars that teachers can use to purchase school supplies during Georgia's Back To School sales tax holiday this fall. It's just one more tool we can provide our teachers to help them do their important job.

Of course, showing respect for teachers means not just rewarding their hard work, but understanding that they are the ones on the front lines and who deserve a listening ear for their ideas. As I announced yesterday, this year we will meet another top request from teachers by reducing class sizes in grades K-8 through my Truth in Class Size legislation.

My budget includes \$163 million for class size reductions. My budget also includes \$447 million in bonds for classroom construction, for new equipment and for buying 1000 new school buses. That means new buses for every county in the state.

A strong classroom focus will help every district and every school improve. But there is another critical ingredient for raising student achievement – and that's leadership.

Every team needs a great leader to set a great example. In our schools, that's the principal's job. And in those schools that most need improvement, solid leadership from the principal's office is essential.

With many of our most experienced principals approaching retirement, we must now recruit and train the next generation of educational leaders. My budget includes \$3 million to recruit High Performance Principals to lead our Needs Improvement middle and high schools.

High Performance Principals have a proven record of raising student achievement results in the schools they lead. These are the leaders we want in our most challenged schools.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you know, sadly, nearly 40% of our students drop out of high school before earning their diplomas. In a state with as much promise as Georgia, that's an unacceptable waste of talent. It's high time for Georgia to make sure more of its students graduate from high school.

In the competitive global economy, dropouts will pay a steep price for their incomplete education. The jobs with a future are knowledge jobs. And you've got to have the knowledge before you get the job.

Our employers also pay the price of high dropout rates when they can't find enough skilled workers. That is why my budget targets \$23.3 million to raise Georgia's graduation rates. This will put a completion counselor in every single high school in Georgia, with the sole purpose of working individually with students to encourage them to complete their education.

Overall, my budget devotes over 72% of our new revenues to education. They say the best time to plant an oak tree is 100 years ago. But the second best time to plant an oak tree is today. My friends, with this budget we are planting a forest of oaks for Georgia's children and their future.

Getting a good education and finding that first job are doors of opportunity that should be open wide for every young Georgian.

Before I discuss our broader plans to spur job creation in Georgia, I want to highlight one initiative that is introducing a special group of young Georgians to the workplace.

The TeenWork initiative offers summer employment opportunities to teens in foster care. Last summer over 400 foster teens were employed by state agencies and private companies. Before starting work, each teen received training in basic job skills such as how to apply for a job, proper business attire and good time management.

Foster kids often lack the mentors and role models to teach them workplace fundamentals. The TeenWork program has given these foster teens a successful start in their working careers. But that doesn't surprise me.

I'm proud to tell you that the TeenWork Initiative was created by the First Lady's Children's Cabinet, chaired by the best champion Georgia's children have ever known -- my lifelong partner and the love of my life, Mary Perdue.

Through the Our Children Campaign, Mary has encouraged thousands of Georgians to get involved in meeting the needs of abused and neglected children within their communities. She has organized three statewide Summits on our Children to raise public awareness of children's issues.

Last year, Mary and the Children's Cabinet helped launch the Foster Family Foundation of Georgia. The Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization that will recruit, train, and support both foster and adoptive families.

That's only a fraction of Mary's many efforts to improve the lives of Georgia's children. I'm not bragging when I say I work hard as your Governor. But I want you to know that your First Lady works just as hard for this cause so close to her heart.

And, Mary, I want you to know how proud I am of you and the example you set of caring for all of Georgia's children.

In a very real sense, everything we do to strengthen and improve our state is for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

I know that being a proud father and grandfather strengthens my determination that the next generation of Georgians will inherit from us a state where they can aspire to a better education, a better job and a better life. And a state with its priorities clear ... and its books in order.

Yes, we want these things for ourselves. But, above all, don't we want to leave our children a better world?

Yet, for many parents, improving life for their children isn't just about hopes and dreams for the future ... it's also a question of economic survival in the here and now.

For today's families, child care is a critical need. That is why I am proposing we enact a Georgia Child Care Tax Credit in addition to the existing federal tax credit.

The new Georgia Child Care Tax Credit will return \$50 million to working parents by 2008, to help with child care expenses.



Helping parents and families afford child care is the kind of practical step that government should take to help create the conditions for prosperity.

Government should be about the business of empowering Georgians to learn more, earn more and save more.

Government should also make the wise long-term investments that will help our economy keep growing and keep creating jobs for decades to come.

You see, in the 21st century global economy we have only two options. Georgia can lead or Georgia can be left behind.

I want to guarantee you this – as long as I’m your Governor, Georgia is going to lead. To lead, we must innovate. That means, we must become a State of Innovation.

That means making innovation our competitive advantage in every area of our economy – in our existing industries, in our homegrown small businesses and in the growth industries of the future, such as life sciences and nano-manufacturing.

These are the industries that will cure cancer ... improve our food safety and supply ... and provide new sources of energy to power our lives and propel our state’s economy forward.

Building an innovation economy requires three main ingredients: people, capital and infrastructure.

Georgia is investing in all three areas. We’re investing \$80 million this year alone.

Our Eminent Scholar program already brings world-class researchers to Georgia – the scientists and inventors whose research changes lives and becomes the basis for new companies and new industries.

Bringing university research from the lab to the market has helped us create successful companies in Georgia like Mindspring, now Earthlink ... and medical science leaders like Inhibitex and Theragenics.

At our Centers of Innovation, we are bringing our best university research together with top Georgia companies to make new advances in logistics, data processing, aeronautics, agriculture. New advances that will help Georgia companies become more competitive, grow more rapidly and create more jobs.

In the area of investment capital, we will budget \$5 million to expand our Seed Capital Fund for early stage bioscience entrepreneurs. And \$5 million for the Life Sciences

Facilities Fund to help provide growing bioscience firms with the facilities they need to continue their growth here in Georgia.

To strengthen our investment infrastructure, I am recommending investments in nanotechnology, energy and broadband technology.

My budget includes \$38 million in bonds to complete the construction of a Nanotechnology Research Center at Georgia Tech to establish Georgia as a global leader in this emerging industry.

To ensure Georgia's energy future, I am budgeting \$2 million to seed research on developing alternative fuels, such as expanding our BioRefinery program at the University of Georgia.

Bio-fuels convert materials like wood chips, peanut hulls and other organic matter into viable energy sources. As a strong agricultural state, Georgia should be, and will be, a leader in this field. We'll be able to meet more of our own energy needs, reduce our dependence on foreign oil ... and turn a profit.

The third area of investment is broadband. I call broadband the new dial tone. Today, we could not imagine any business, much less an entire community, operating without access to reliable telephone service. Today, broadband internet access is just as important for our 21st Century communications infrastructure.

The goal of my Broadband Initiative is to ensure that every Georgia community is plugged in to the global economy with the broadband connectivity that individuals and businesses need.

I will ask the OneGeorgia Authority to establish a \$5 million grant program to support rural broadband access. In addition, I am also proposing a \$5 million initiative at the Georgia Technology Authority to partner with at least three Georgia cities to bring wireless broadband – WiFi – to their areas.

With these, and the many other investments included in my budget, we will continue Georgia's transformation into a State of Innovation that will provide a growing economy, good jobs and thriving communities for our citizens.

As we build an educated and growing Georgia, we must also act to create a safer Georgia. We must get dangerous sexual predators off our streets and away from our children.

I know that with the General Assembly's help, Georgia will have the toughest sexual predator law in the nation by the end of this session.

And to ensure that we have enough prison space to keep dangerous criminals locked up, I am recommending \$45 million to add more than 4,300 beds to the State's prison system and reduce the jail backlog burden on our counties.

Unfortunately, we are all too aware of a growing plague in our state – methamphetamine. Meth destroys lives, attacks families, and undermines communities. Georgia has been a leader in battling the meth scourge. But we need to do more.

My budget includes \$1 million to create a GBI "MethForce" to target and investigate meth-related crimes statewide.

I have also invited U.S. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales to come to Georgia and discuss stronger state and federal coordination of anti-meth efforts. He has accepted and will be here next month.

We will not allow the scourge of meth abuse to run unchecked in our state. Georgia will fight back ... and Georgia will win.

That's just the nature of our people. Show us a problem and we will find a solution.

That problem-solving, "get it done" attitude that comes so naturally to Georgians is exactly what they expect from their state government.

Another thing they expect and deserve is efficient, customer-friendly service.

One example of the emphasis we are placing on customer service was the excellent work of Joe Doyle and the Task Force he led to identify specific ways we can and will ensure that government services are easier to access, faster to complete and delivered by friendly people, with a smile.

Let me share just one success story with you. It is a story still in progress, because we've still got work to do. But I am proud of their results so far.

Last year at this podium I said that if government didn't have a monopoly on the business of issuing drivers licenses, we'd be out of that business. I think that accurately summed up the frustration many Georgians felt over the long lines and headaches at the DMV.

So we created a new Department of Driver Services with one core mission -- getting Georgia drivers their licenses quickly, efficiently, and courteously.

Commissioner Greg Dozier and the nearly 750 Driver Services employees have taken their mission to heart and taken the licensing process to a whole new level.

We are hiring more license examiners, opening new service centers, enabling online change of address, and otherwise making the license renewal process more pleasant and convenient for busy Georgia drivers.

How much progress have we made? Well, radio listeners know that Neal Boortz is not exactly low maintenance when it comes to government services. But even Neal took time on the air to compliment his most recent license renewing experience.

So to Greg and all his team at the Department of Driver Services – thank you, and keep up the good work.

Just as Georgians expect our government to provide excellent service, we also expect, and rightfully so, that government will respect our individual rights and liberties, including our property rights.

Last summer the Supreme Court of the United States took a hammer to property rights with their eminent domain decision. The Court ruled that government can use its awesome power to condemn your property and give it to another private owner, for private profit.

I say now what I said then – the Court got it wrong. That's not the America I grew up in ... and that's not the America I want to live in. Private property is one of the bedrock foundations of our freedom. And I stand with Georgians in saying -- we will do whatever it takes to protect our personal property rights.

But government has another awesome power – the power to tax. Whenever government takes more than it needs of your money we have a responsibility to give it back. And that is exactly what my budget does.

When rising gas prices brought a revenue windfall to government last fall, we returned \$77 million to taxpayers by suspending the sales tax on gasoline.

When skyrocketing natural gas prices produced another windfall to the state and made it more expensive for Georgians to heat their homes this winter, I asked the General Assembly to ratify my Executive Order cutting the sales tax on natural gas for home heating in half, giving up to \$20 million back to Georgians.

On behalf of the people of Georgia, I want to thank you for your speedy action today on this important item.

There is another giving back story I want to share with you. We're giving back to Georgia seniors. They've worked hard and paid taxes all their lives. As we move toward

my goal of eliminating the income tax for seniors, this year we will begin giving seniors \$285 million in tax savings.

Additionally, we've provided \$60 million in tax relief for small business.

We reformed our corporate tax system to provide greater incentives for companies to locate and grow in Georgia.

My proposed Land Conservation Tax Credit provides tax savings of up to a quarter of a million dollars for land donated by individuals, and half a million for corporate donations.

Along with the \$5 million in my budget for local land conservation grants, this credit will help us reach Georgia's conservation goals.

Our annual sales tax holidays have helped Georgia parents pay for back to school clothing and supplies with over \$10 million in savings.

We acknowledged the sacrifices of our National Guard by exempting the military income of Guard members on active duty from income tax – a well-earned savings to military families of \$4.5 million.

And we've delivered hundreds of millions of dollars in property tax relief to Georgia home owners. My budget this year fully funds the homestead tax exemption at \$434 million.

Collectively, including my new proposals, we will have provided Georgians with more than two billion dollars in tax relief since I took office.

Spending only what we need and no more. Constantly seeking new efficiencies. Aggressively returning money to the taxpayers.

That's what it means for government to "live within its means." That's what it means for those of us entrusted with the management of government to meet our obligations of stewardship.

The people of Georgia are the owners of our state, the ultimate shareholders to whom we are all accountable.

As a growing economy brings a brighter revenue picture, we will not lose sight of these cornerstone truths.

We will continue to ask the tough questions and scrutinize every program and every line item. We will continue investing in Georgia families and their kitchen table issues, like education, jobs, and safe communities.

But one thing we won't do is go back to the bad spending habits of the past. As I said here last year, we've already burned the ships that could take us back. We're committed now to going forward, to building a New Georgia on the foundations of openness, accountability and stewardship.

In recent months, I have traveled to nearly every corner of our state. I've met with hundreds of Georgians. Farmers and students, small business owners and factory workers, young parents and retirees.

They share with me their stories of success ... their plans ... their dreams ... and their optimism about Georgia's future.

I feel very strongly about my responsibility to all of our citizens, as I know every member of this Legislature does.

But I must admit that there is one group of Georgians toward whom I feel an extra measure of responsibility – our men and women in the Armed Forces serving overseas.

Especially on my mind are the troops of the Georgia National Guard's 48th Brigade, currently on active duty in Iraq.

I had the privilege of spending the Thanksgiving holiday with our troops in the Middle East.

I was humbled to travel to Iraq, and Afghanistan to express the gratitude, pride, and support that Georgians feel for these men and women -- our neighbors and family members -- who are giving so much to defend our freedom.

I let our troops know that Georgians are keeping our promise to care for their families while they are away. Many Georgia companies and individuals have given to the Georgia National Guard Foundation, which I encourage you all to support.

Tens of thousands of Georgians are lending their support in countless other ways, including through their prayers.

As I visited with our soldiers, I asked if there was anything I could do for them.

They wanted Georgians to know that they understand their mission to help a true democracy take root in Iraq and they are committed to finishing the job.

Some wanted me to bring personal messages to their loved ones, which I did.

Others asked, "Governor, I want to know if there will be a job waiting for me at home when we finish the job here."

Last May, I proudly stood with our troops at Fort Stewart to salute them and wish them Godspeed as the 48th deployed to Iraq. But what I'm looking forward to this year is standing with our troops when Georgia welcomes them home.

This is the year the 48th comes home. And the least we can do as we welcome them back is ensure that every returning service member finds a job waiting for them in Georgia. As their Governor and commander-in-chief I have made a solemn pledge to our Guard members that this will be true.

Will you help me keep that promise?

Our citizen soldiers are performing heroic, world-changing work. Not only by fighting bravely, but through the small, day-to-day human victories. In this war against an inhumane creed of terrorism, our innate compassion and humanity are the most effective -- and gentlest -- weapon.

Thanks to Georgians, a better world is already coming into view for one young Iraqi -- baby Noor.

It was members of Georgia's 48th Brigade who helped give new life to 3-month-old Noor, an Iraqi newborn with a severe spinal cord defect that was untreatable in Iraq.

Our citizen-soldiers arranged to fly baby Noor and her grandmother to Atlanta, where doctors at Children's Health Care have performed the life-saving surgery she needs at no charge.

Baby Noor is still here in Atlanta, undergoing treatment. But when she returns to her parents in Iraq, she will bear a new name, a name that carries with it the promise of hope.

Her family has decided to call this precious little girl ... Georgia.

One of the soldiers of the 48th whom I met during my visit was Private Shane Parham of Social Circle. Private Parham served as a gunner on a Humvee. He was injured in the line of duty when his Humvee rolled over and is now back home in Georgia.

Shane has been recommended to receive the Bronze Star.

When he is not wearing our country's uniform, Shane serves the people of Georgia in the uniform of a Walton County deputy sheriff.

As a father of three young daughters, Shane Parham's love of children has given him a special insight into the significance of the work he and his comrades in the 48th are doing.

When he got back from Iraq, he had this to say: "If we can get these Iraqi children to like us, our children will not have to fight theirs."

That may be the wisest comment I have heard on the conflict in Iraq. Differences of religion, politics and culture aside, Iraqis love their children too, just like we do in Georgia.

And just like Georgians, Iraqi parents want a better life for their children. That was something they could never hope for. Now, thanks to a young Georgia father named Shane Parham ... and his thousands of fellow service members in the 48th Brigade and across the Armed Forces ... Iraqis have hope.

We are proud to have Private Shane Parham and his wife Wendy with us in the gallery today, along with Georgia's Adjutant General David Poythress.

Please join me in thanking General Poythress, Private Parham and all of our troops who are defending our freedom here and overseas.

Don't let anyone tell you our troops aren't making a difference. Everything we hope to build in Georgia and every dream we hope to attain for our state is made possible by the shield and protection that they provide.

They make possible the progress I expect to report when I return here next year. And they help ensure that for Georgia, as for all of America, our best days are always ahead of us. God bless America and God bless Georgia.

Senator Williams of the 19th moved that the Joint Session of the General Assembly be now dissolved and the motion prevailed.

The President of the Senate, Lieutenant Governor Mark Taylor, announced the Joint Session dissolved.

The Speaker called the House to order.

Representative Keen of the 179th moved that the House do now adjourn until 10:00 o'clock, tomorrow morning, and the motion prevailed.



The Speaker announced the House adjourned until 10:00 o'clock, tomorrow morning.